



# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

301 CENTENNIAL MALL SOUTH • PO BOX 94987 • LINCOLN, NE 68509

Hawthorne Suites, LTD  
216 N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, NE 68504  
402.464.4400

*February 13, 2001  
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.*

## MINUTES

Present: Berger, Bloechle, Carey, Curry, Davis, Fox, Gieschen, Grone, Jelinek, Lloyd, Nolan  
Brown, Ortmeier, Rasmussen, Sorensen, Shepard  
Absent: Breckner, Hodges, Holcomb, Kolb

### I. *Public Comment*

There was no public comment. Bloechle welcomed Judy Ortmeier back to the council. Judy, who previously worked for Vocational Rehabilitation and served on the council as the VR counselor representative, is now working for a private rehabilitation company who has agreed to let her continue serving on the council.

### II. *Approval of Agenda*

A report by Alvin Fox on Ticket to Work was added as D under VII. Reports. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Gieschen and seconded by Davis. Motion passed.

### III. *Approval of Minutes from December 13, 2000*

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Fox and seconded by Gieschen. Motion passed.

### IV. *Director's Report (Frank Lloyd)*

**1. Case Monitoring** – VR recently moved from an individual caseload carrying counselor model to a team model. This will involve dividing responsibilities differently between associates and specialist. VR is collecting information from staff and putting together a guide for best practices which will look at specific processes and define the best and most efficient way of completing them. Many consumers drop out because follow up and regular contact is not maintained. This model will help VR staff to be able to maintain that contact.

**2. Case Reviews** – Don is developing a tool to be used for case reviews. The current draft is being reviewed by program directors and office directors. The intent is to identify the critical things that cannot be monitored through an automated system but still need to be monitored.

**3. Training for New Staff** – New staff complete training for orientation, QUEST, Medical Aspects I and II, and providing direct services. Frank and Margy meet with new staff after six months of employment and have received positive feedback about the training.

**4. Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)** – The office directors will be meeting with the administrative staff to discuss revisions to the IPE. A draft will be developed that will be presented to consumers for input.

**5. Medical Aspects Training** – Medical Aspects I has been completed and II will be presented next week. Information will be provided about Madonna, blood and alcohol programs, the deaf and hearing impaired, and mental retardation. It will be videotaped for use with future staff. Council members are welcome to attend any or all parts of the training.

**6. Rule 72** – The changes made to Rule 72 regarding cost sharing and post secondary policies will be discussed later in the meeting. A copy of the information sent out to staff about how to implement Rule 72 will be distributed to the council with the minutes.

**7. State Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Council** – Frank met with George Hannigan to discuss issues regarding supported employment for people with mental health. Employment for individuals with mental health issues should be a shared responsibility between VR, social security, and the mental health system. A subcommittee that consists of VR, HHS, providers, and consumers will be created to look at employment as it relates to mental health issues.

**8. Workforce Development** – VR has been working to have a presence in many areas of the state where one stops are being developed. Staff are already working with the one stops in Columbus and Lincoln, and VR is looking at space in Beatrice, Grand Island, and Norfolk. It is uncertain how VR will be involved in Omaha.

V. Old Business

A. Executive Committee Vacancy (*Sharon Bloechle*)

A motion was made by Carey and seconded by Nolan Brown that Ortmeier be elected to fill the vacancy on the Executive Committee. Motion passed.

B. Annual Report Update (*Cathy Callaway*)

The Annual Report were distributed to council members. A copy will be sent to members of the legislature, VR agencies in other states, VR staff, and others on the mailing list.

C. IPE Committee Focus Group (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

Vicki distributed a draft of the questions to be used in the IPE focus groups. VR is hoping to use the input from the focus groups to improve the IPE and make it better for consumers. Council members who have input about the questions can give it to Vicki.

Support groups that are already meeting (i.e., Mental Health Care Group in Hastings, Manic Depressive Group in Omaha, ARC in Grand Island, etc.) will be used as the focus groups. Since not all consumer will be VR clients, a lot of different questions are being used. VR will also be surveying transition students to get their input. A neutral person from the Mediation Center will be facilitating the focus groups.

D. Legislative Committee ADA Letter (*Tim Kolb*)

Kolb was not present to report. The letter about the council discussed at the previous council meeting was sent to legislators as revised. A copy of the letter was mailed to council members with their meeting materials. Kolb has been asked by the council to write a separate letter indicating the SRC's support of the ADA. It will be distributed to the council for review when finished.

- E.     **Rule 72 (*Don Crouch*)**  
Copies of the new rule were distributed at the council meeting. The effective date on the front (December 18, 2000) is incorrect. The rule goes into effect July 1, 2001. The rule represents two major changes – 1) postsecondary training; and 2) financial participation. VR will be developing draft procedures for the administrative staff to review, and then will provide training to staff on how to implement the changes. Exceptions can be made by Area Administrators based on individual circumstances. (*A summary of the how the changes will be implemented is enclosed with these minutes.*)

VII.    Reports

A.     Committee Reports

**Client Service Delivery (*Ortmeier reporting*)**

Two VR staff members participated in their committee meeting to discuss different ways of surveying clients to find out their satisfaction in receiving VR services. They want a survey that doesn't add to staff workload. The committee suggests having a questionnaire that is handed to clients when they come into the office. This would get a better return rate this way than by mailing the surveys out. The survey would be divided into different sections on orientation, eligibility, maintaining contact, etc. and clients would fill out the sections that apply to where they are in the process.

Vicki, Don, and Judy agreed to develop initial questions to be sent to the committee for comment. Once a survey is developed, the committee would like all offices to use it for 5-6 months. The information will then be summarized and sent to the council. Local offices could eventually adapt it to their office. It needs to be used as a tool to receive feedback from clients on how staff can improve.

After the committee reviews the proposed questions, it will be distributed to the council for input.

**Interagency Outreach (*Shepard reporting*)**

The committee wants to enhance interagency collaboration efforts by identifying who are the referral sources from VR and what are the outcomes from the referral sources. They may be asking several people with disabilities who have gone through the referral process to discuss how it worked for them.

The committee will also continue their efforts to keep the council informed of workforce investment activities.

**Legislative Committee –**

Council members interested in keeping up with legislation may want to contact Mary O'Hare, staff person with the DD Council. They distribute Newsline, a publication that summarizes legislation and is put out by the NE Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

B.     CAP Report ( *Vicki Rasmussen*)

A CAP Report was distributed to council members with the meeting materials. Vicki reported on three additional cases since the report was sent. The council discussed information contained in the report.

The next Joint Agency Meeting (JAM) is scheduled for May 17 in Omaha at the PVA. It is being coordinated by the PVA, Eastern Office on Aging, and Goodwill Industries. The one on September 10 will be hosted by the Salvation Army, and another will be held in Norfolk (date yet to be determined).

C. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

Kolb was not available to provide the SILC report.

D. Ticket to Work (*Alvin Fox*)

Fox reported that comments for the Ticket to Work hearing are due by March 1. Information about Ticket to Work can be found at [www.iapsrs.org](http://www.iapsrs.org).

Crouch indicated that the Ticket to Work program is through the Social Security Administration. It involves new legislation that would take people currently getting SSI and give them a voucher to use to get the services they need to get back to work. These people would take the voucher to the program that offers the services they need most, VR possibly being one.

The government is currently trying to develop regulations for the legislation. It is extremely difficult to figure out how all of the pieces work together. Currently if VR works with a consumer and gets them off of SSI, they get reimbursed for the expense of the rehabilitation. Under the ticket to work program, people get the money upfront and have different ways they can pay for their services. If a person takes the ticket to a private organization and uses it up, but doesn't get served, they can then go to VR for services and VR wouldn't get anything.

VIII. New Business

A. State Plan and Policy Issues (*Don Crouch*)

Background – Seventy-nine (79%) percent of VR's funds are federal. In order to get that money, VR has to develop a state and strategic plan and have it approved by the federal government. In the past, the plan was developed on a timeline that did not allow much time for the SRC to provide input. Now, VR brings issues from the state plan to the council at each meeting and asks for their input. The issue they need input on now is a voucher system.

At the last SRC meeting, VR discussed using a voucher system for services which would allow consumers to do more on their own. With a voucher system, instead of VR paying a provider directly for services, they would give the money to the consumer to purchase the services from the provider of their choice. The council provided input at the last meeting regarding advantages and disadvantages of this type of system.

As a first step, VR has decided to pilot it with post-secondary training. The first year a consumer is in post-secondary training, VR will provide them with \$300.00 as soon as they pre-register for school to use for books or fees. The balance will then be paid directly to the school. Every year after that, VR will again provide \$300.00 upfront for books and fees, but then the balance will be paid to the consumer to pay for their own tuition. Exceptions would be if the consumer is not responsible for the money in the first year, or if the consumer requests that the money be paid directly to the school.

**Council members asked if the grant VR would be giving to post secondary students would be considered income on the individual's income taxes. Don has checked this out and has been assured that this would not count as income.**

**One of the reasons for providing money for books to clients rather than authorizing to a book store is for confidentiality. Someone reported that the Nebraska Bookstore was using a sign to direct VR clients to a certain payment line which would then mean anyone in that line was a VR client. Members of the SRC were concerned about this practice. After the meeting, Don went to the Nebraska Bookstore to see what their**

**practice really is. He found that no such sign has been used. When VR clients bring books to the cashier and identify themselves they are direct to the customer service center for checkout. VR is just one of many charge accounts they have with businesses and all of those are handled at the customer service center. Although this practice is certainly better than having a sign there are still problems with confidentiality which supports VR's desire to provide the money directly to the client.**

B. Change of August Meeting Date

The August 7 meeting date was changed to September 10 and will be held in Hastings to accommodate those who will be attending the JAM. The council meeting will be from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm. Council members are then invited to stay and attend the JAM from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm.

The April 17 meeting, which was originally scheduled for Hastings, will now be held in Lincoln.

IX. Presentation – WIA (*Michelle Davis*)

Michelle Davis from Western Management Service provided information to the council about Workforce Development. The WIA was put into federal law in 1998 in an effort to make services more accessible. It lumps together 19 partnering agencies, serving adults, youth, and dislocated workers. The handouts distributed indicate the eligibility requirements for different programs and the services available to each.

X. Presentation – NE Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (*Karen Mosier*)

Karen Mosier, Transition Coordinator/Program Specialist for the NCBVI presented information to the council about the transition grant. It is a five-year grant for \$275,000.00/year. A majority of the money is used to pay 3 transition counselors (one each in North Platte, Omaha, and Lincoln). The focus of the grant is employment. There is a high unemployment rate in Nebraska (58%-70%) of all blind people. They work to convince employers and employees that there is a benefit on both sides.

The transition counselors are directly involved in the development of special programs which provide employment opportunities for individuals 16-26 years of age. These programs include 1) Winterfest, which involves employment investigation skills; 2) WAGES (Work And Gain Experience in the Summer) Program, which identifies opportunities for employment in government offices and non-profit organizations; 3) Round To It, a two-day workshop on employment related things (interviews, how to deal with your disability, how to be positive, etc.); 4) Project Independence (children age 7-14), which focuses on independence building activities; 5) College Prep, a workshop for dealing with how and what skills are needed to deal with thing you encounter in college; and 6) Opportunity Knocks, which provides funding and job shadowing opportunities for individuals in the last 3 months of orientation center training.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Davis and seconded by Curry. Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.